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Identical letters dated 18 March 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and President of the Security Council

I write to express my grave concern in light of the recent increase in the firing of rockets by the terrorist entity Hamas that controls the Gaza Strip.

This constant terrorist phenomenon continues to expose the civilian population of southern Israel to serious threat and imminent danger. On 11 and 12 February 2010, Palestinian terrorists from the Gaza Strip launched attacks using automatic weapons and planted explosives near the Israel-Gaza border, as well as within Israeli territory. Also on 12 February 2010, a Qassam rocket exploded near the municipalities of Sha'ar Hanegev and Hof Ashkelon.

Despite Israel's considerable restraint, on 11 and 13 March 2010, Qassam rockets struck the area of Eshkol and destroyed a building only metres from private homes. On 17 March 2010, a Qassam rocket struck adjacent to a kibbutz near Sderot. Two civilians, including a young girl, were evacuated for medical care.

All of these attacks culminated today, 18 March 2010, when a Qassam rocket fired from the Gaza Strip struck a greenhouse in the community of Netiv Ha'asara, targeting and killing an agricultural worker. Earlier in the day, a Qassam rocket launched from Gaza exploded in the vicinity of Sderot. As the Secretary-General prepares to depart for the region, such attacks undoubtedly do not represent a welcoming message from the terrorist-dominated Gaza Strip.

On the contrary, these attacks reflect Hamas's ongoing campaign to target Israeli civilians. At the same time, Hamas cynically turns the civilian population of Gaza into human shields as it launches attacks from civilian areas and stores weapons in hospitals, mosques, schools, and other civilian structures. This blatant disregard of international norms and principles is further demonstrated by Hamas continuing to hold Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit in captivity, denying him the most elementary human rights, including access to international humanitarian personnel.

Israel urges the Secretary-General to express the unequivocal expectation of the international community for the immediate release of Staff Sergeant Shalit, and for prompt rectification of this grave situation which is contrary to the most fundamental standards of human rights.

Given such realities and the ongoing nature of Hamas's murderous attacks, Israel will — when necessary — exercise its right of self-defence pursuant to international law. On the eve of the Secretary-General's visit, Hamas's abhorrent

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modus operandi demonstrates its true intentions and reflects the real challenges to peace and security.

On this matter, I wish to reiterate Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who stated early in January 2010 in the aftermath of Hamas attacks: "Any firing at our territory will be responded to strongly and immediately". Similarly, Israel calls on the Secretary-General and relevant United Nations organs to condemn Hamas's ongoing terrorist attacks, as well as its tactics that endanger Israeli and Palestinian civilians, in the strongest possible terms.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter of complaint distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gabriela **Shalev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative